

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01

/058 W

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R 231225Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL MADRAS

SECSTATE WASHDC 7878

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 12344

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IN

SUBJ: ANTI-COW SLAUGHTER AGITATION

1. WE CONTINUE TO HEAR THAT THE PM IS SERIOUSLY CONCERNED OVER POSSIBLE POLITICAL REPERCUSSIONS OF VINOBA BHAVE'S PROPOSED FAST AGAINST COW SLAUGHTER TO BEGIN SEPT 11. BHAVE'S ATTITUDE HAS REPORTEDLY HARDENED SINCE THE LATE-JULY GOVT RAID UPON HIS PANAU (MAHARASHTRA) ASHRAM DURING WHICH ALL COPIES OF HIS WEEKLY MAGAZINE ANNOUNCING HIS PLANS TO BEGIN SATYAGRAHA WERE SEIZED. TWO IMPORTANT MEMBERS OF HIS ASHRAM WHO WERE PREVIOUSLY SYMPATHETIC TO PM HAVE REPORTEDLY "DEFECTED" AND BHAVE IS SAID TO HAVE TOLD J P NARAYAN AT THE END OF JULY THAT, WHILE HIS INITIAL FAST WOULD BE ONLY AGAINST COW SLAUGHTER, HE WAS PREPARED TO EXTEND THE SCOPE OF HIS FAST LATER TO EMERGENCY-RELATED ISSUES.

2. ONE OF BHAVE'S ENTOURAGE, A MR PRAHBARKAR, REPORTEDLY MET WITH THE PM AUGUST 21, ALTHOUGH WHETHER AT BHAVE'S OR THE PM'S INSTANCE IS NOT CLEAR. WE HOPE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS, BUT PERHAPS CONGENS BOMBAY OR MADRAS MAY ALSO PICK UP SOMETHING AT THEIR ENDS. AS WE NOTED IN NEW DELHI 12243, PM

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WENT ON AT CONSIDERABLE LENGTH ABOUT HER CONCERN OVER

ANTI-COW SLAUGHTER AGITATION IN CONVERSATION WITH
FRENCH AMBASSADOR RECENTLY, AND WE UNDERSTAND SHE HAS
DONE THE SAME THING WITH OTHER VISITORS AS WELL.

3. LEELA DAMODARAN MENON, A RAJYA SABHA CONGRESS MP
FROM KERALA WHO HAS CLOSE TIES TO THE PM, TOLD EMBOFFS
AUGUST 23 THAT SHE THOUGHT THE GOVT OF KERALA WOULD
GIVE IN AND AGREE TO PASS AN ANTI-COW SLAUGHTER BILL
IN THE LARGER INTERESTS OF THE COUNTRY. THERE WERE
TIMES, SHE SAID, WHEN EVEN FOOLISH DEMANDS HAD TO BE
ACCEDED TO WHEN MADE BY OLD, HIGHLY RESPECTED MEMBERS
OF THE FAMILY. MAHARASHTRA IS ALREADY PREPARED TO
PASS SUCH LEGISLATION, AND WITH TAMILNAD UNDER
PRESIDENT'S RULE, AN ORDINANCE BANNING KILLING OF COWS
SHOULD BE MANAGEABLE IN THAT STATE. SINCE VINOBA HAS
ALREADY EXEMPTED NAGALAND FROM THE TARGET ZONE OF
HIS AGITATION, THIS LEAVES ONLY THE HARD NUT OF
WEST BENGAL LEFT TO CRACK BEFORE ALL STATES HAVE ANTI-
COW SLAUGHTER LEGISLATION, AND THE PM CAN HEAVE A SIGH
OF RELIEF OVER VINOBA'S THREATENED FAST ON THIS ISSUE.

4. FOR CALCUTTA: WE WOULD WELCOME YOUR BEST JUDGMENT,
BASED ON THE CONVERSATIONS YOU HAVE HAD WITH WEST
BENGAL GOVT OFFICIALS AND POLITICIANS, AS TO WHETHER
SOME TYPE OF ANTI-COW SLAUGHTER LEGISLATION COULD BE
PUSHED THROUGH THE LEGISLATURE THERE WITHOUT SERIOUS
POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES. FOR BOMBAY AND MADRAS: WE
WOULD LIKE AN UPDATE ON PROSPECTS AND PLANNING FOR
SUCH LEGISLATION IN TAMILNAD AND MAHARASHTRA, AS WELL
AS ANY CORROBORATING REPORTS MADRAS MAY HAVE ON
KERALA SITUATION.

5. OF COURSE, THE PM ALWAYS HAS THE PROBLEM OF HOW
TO HANDLE A FAST BY BHAVE ON OTHER ISSUES, BUT SHE MAY
BELIEVE THAT IF HE FASTS ON POLITICAL MATTERS SHE
CAN MANAGE THE PROBLEM. IT IS A FAST ON THE HIGHLY
EMOTIVE RELIGIOUS ISSUE OF COWS WHICH POSES THE REAL
POLITICAL PROBLEMS.
SCHNEIDER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CATTLE, LEGISLATIVE BILLS, DEATHS, MEATS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 AUG 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: vogelfj
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976NEWDE12344
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760321-0585
From: NEW DELHI
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760829/aaaaaysl.tel
Line Count: 99
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: vogelfj
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <09 JUN 2004 by buchant0>; APPROVED <07 OCT 2004 by vogelfj>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ANTI-COW SLAUGHTER AGITATION
TAGS: PINT, IN, (BHAVE, VINOBA)
To: CALCUTTA BOMBAY
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006